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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the use of the Individual Career Plan (ICP) with students having disabilities at the University of Massachusetts (UMASS) at Amherst. The ICP is a career development tool that encourages self-determination. First, a summary of the barriers to career achievement for students with disabilities in higher education is presented. The key concept of self-determination is discussed as the focus of the theoretical framework of the ICP model. This model concentrates on involving students in the process of career planning activities that will facilitate the development of a career goal and the preparation necessary for achieving that goal. At UMASS, the ICP process is begun by the disability service provider but often involves case managers, academic advisors, career counselors, and faculty. The ICP may be used weekly, monthly, each semester, or annually. Using the ICP as a guide, the student learns to evaluate his/her skills, explore careers, and utilize experiential learning opportunities. An attached sample ICP encourages recording of information concerning: career goal, counselor information, history of academic major, counseling services utilized, career center activities participated in, work history, job-related skills, extra-curricular activities, volunteer activities, and accommodations needed. (DB)

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An Individual Career Plan for Students with Disabilities in Higher Education

David Baggett

University of Massachusetts at Amherst

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Authors' Note

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An Individual Career Plan for

Students with Disabilities in Higher Education

The Individual Career Plan (ICP) is a career development tool for students with disabilities in higher education that encourages self-determination. A model ICP has been developed and used by disability service providers at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst since October 1992. This paper introduces the University's implementation of the ICP concept to professionals (e.g., case managers, disability service providers, academic advisors, or career center staff) who work with students with disabilities in postsecondary educational settings.

Prior to presenting the UMASS model, a summary of the barriers to career achievement for students with disabilities in higher education which stimulated the ICP concept is presented, and will provide readers with background information. The key concept of self-determination will also be presented as a theoretical framework for the ICP model. The University's use of the ICP is then summarized and recommendations are made to professionals who may wish to consider using it in their work with students with disabilities.

Barriers to Career Achievement

The ICP concept is built on the premise that since no two people with disabilities are alike, the aspects of career development will be different for each individual with a disability. Career counseling should be individualized to meet the special and unique needs of students with disabilities. Szymanski & Hershenson (1992) state,

> "As persons with disabilities are a heterogeneous population, no single approach will be applicable to all persons with disabilities, or even to all those with either congenital or acquired disabilities. Therefore, as with all career counseling clients, the focus should be eclectic, that is on identifying and meeting individual needs, removing specific barriers, expanding the person's range of options, and supporting the person through his or her transition to work" (p. 299).

It is important to focus on the need for providing career development interventions for students with disabilities at the postsecondary level because vocational development is recognized as a life long process.

A number of factors directly influence the process of career development for individuals with disabilities in higher education. While the disability itself is the most important determinant of career behavior (Osipow, 1976), the type of disability and the age of onset (King, 1990; Overs, 1975; Turner & Szymanski, 1990) have a major impact on career choice and development, and the corresponding career achievement of students with disabilities. Environmental influences also conspire to limit the early social and vocational experiences of people with disabilities. Additional critical concerns for students with disabilities are the lack of work experience, participation in extracurricular activities and volunteer experiences. The previously mentioned experiential learning opportunities are needed to encourage career exploration, career preparation, and career maturity.

Stereotypical perceptions and negative attitudes toward people with disabilities by non-disabled people are significant barriers to the achievement of successful careers for many individuals with disabilities. For example, Dahl (1981) identified two main misconceptions people have concerning the career development of individuals with disabilities: 1) people with disabilities can succeed in only a limited range of careers, and 2) people with disabilities need to be protected. If people who exert influence on an individual with a disability possess these attitudes, that individual is likely to be prevented from pursuing and preparing for a wide range of non-traditional careers.

The career development of students with disabilities is influenced by needs, interests, self-concept, and rational choice on the one hand and external forces and luck on the other. External forces play a proportionately larger role in the vocational fate of people with disabilities than for people without disabilities (Overs, 1975). Because of the nature of the various forces that affect the career development of individuals with disabilities, professionals utilizing the ICP

need to recognize the importance of encouraging students with disabilities to become more self-determining in their career development.

Self-Determination

Victor Frankl (1959) stated that, " A human being is not one thing among others; things determine each other, but man is ultimately self-determining" (p.157). Self-determination may be defined as the ability of individuals to define goals for themselves and to take initiative in achieving those goals (Field & Hoffman, 1993). In other words, self-determined people know what they want and how to get it (Martin & Mithaug, 1992). The ability to be self-determining is a critical skill for all individuals. Since this skill is closely linked to the quality of life that an individual may achieve, professionals who work with students with disabilities should encourage and support students' efforts to become self-determining.

Self-determination is a guiding principle underlying the design of the ICP. To better understand this concept and in order to foster self-determination, professionals need to be aware of the factors that contribute to its acquisition. Five primary traits that underlie self-determination are identified by Ward (1988) as being: 1) self-actualization - realizing one's potential ; 2) assertiveness - expressing one's needs clearly and directly with self-confidence; 3) creativity - being innovative in moving beyond stereotyped images and expectations; 4) pride - feeling good about one's contributions to society; and 5) self-advocacy - acting on one's own behalf.

Understanding the barriers to becoming self-determined is also valuable. Mitchell (1988) identified three such barriers that he believes restrict opportunities for young people with disabilities to become self-determining. These barriers are: 1) overprotection of parents and adults; 2) low expectations by society; and 3) lack of stable support systems to help one cope with failure. Given this, professionals working with postsecondary students with disabilities should provide a supportive and available environment that promotes and enables students to define and achieve their career goals.

The Individual Career Plan

The intention behind an Individual Career Plan (ICP) is to involve students in the process of planning activities that will facilitate 1) the development of a career goal, and 2) the preparation necessary for achieving that goal. It is hoped the ICP will serve as a stimulus for reflection, as well as a means of collecting career development information in an easily accessible and useful format. If properly employed, an ICP could become an effective component in a comprehensive, postsecondary career guidance program for students with disabilities because it includes career information that facilitates self-assessment and career counseling.

Figure 1, an example of a student's ICP as implemented at the University of Massachusetts, illustrates the way relevant career data are entered onto the form. Given the fact that each postsecondary institution is structurally different, an ICP would reflect the scope and nature of the network of career services available to students with disabilities at a particular institution.

Insert Figure 1 about here

At UMASS, the ICP process begins at the disability service provider's office with the initial student contact and should be initiated by the student's case manager. Case managers are oriented to the use of the ICP prior to the start of the academic year. They are given a fifteen page instructional booklet containing detailed descriptions of the items contained in the ICP, as well as an orientation to the intention of each content area. Lists of descriptors and abbreviation guides are included in the instructional booklet as a time saving measure. Students are given a different instructional brochure introducing them to the ICP process.

Case managers, academic advisors, career counselors, and faculty may be involved either directly or indirectly in the ICP process. The ICP is stored in the student's file at either of two campus offices that provide assistance to students with disabilities: the Learning Disabled Student Services (LDSS) or Disability Services Office (DSO). It may be used weekly, monthly, at the beginning and end of each semester, or annually, as need dictates. Students receive an updated

copy of their ICP at the beginning of each semester. The ICP is confidential and access to the document is limited to the staff of the disability services and the student.

The identification of a career goal is usually an important concern for a student with a disability in higher education. One function of the ICP is to help students address this concern. As the student progresses toward his or her career development, the career goal will likely undergo many changes. The career goal might develop from the general to the specific. We try to help students realize that the initial career goal is much like a first draft of a term paper. It will be revised and rewritten over the course of their postsecondary career.

Although it is important for the student to generate a career goal, it is not an issue that should initiate additional stress and anxiety for the student. Case managers may wish to present this as a topic for discussion once a semester or as frequently as the situation arises. When the student identifies his or her career goal, it is entered onto the ICP.

Students with disabilities often lack the ability to make and use vocational choices and exhibit a lack of knowledge of the work environment. It is important to note that this lack of vocational maturity may be identified by a blank resume or by a career goal that is incongruous with the skills and potential of the student. The student's history of academic major may provide insight into his or her initial preferences and interests. The information can be helpful in initiating a conversation about sources of satisfaction in the student's daily academic life. The purpose of the category labeled Why Changed is to identify the reason(s) behind a student's change of major. As with many of the items on the ICP, a list of descriptors for the most common reasons for a change of major are provided in an instructional booklet to expedite the completion of this item.

Vocational assessments, career and general counseling, and career related workshops are available for students through the Division of Counseling Psychology Services (DCPS) of the Center for Counseling and Academic Development (CCAD). The student and case manager may decide that it would be appropriate to make a referral to the DCPS for career counseling. If so, the student must go through the general intake process at the CCAD in order to take any

standardized inventory or receive counseling. The ICP not only records current vocational assessments administered by the DCPS, but also indicates whether the student previously took any standardized inventories.

Career centers are campus resources which help students who have clearly defined career and job choices, and are often underutilized by students with disabilities. The Mather Career Center services at UMASS listed on the ICP are presented in the order in which they are most likely to be used by the student. The inventory records the number of times which the student has participated in the activity and the date and staff member responsible for the training. The information is valuable for future reference and questions since the case manager does not have easy access to this type of information.

Students use a variety of approaches for exploring careers. Job fairs, mentor programs, student organizations, and reading material may be of great benefit in enhancing the career development of a student. These kinds of activities are entered on the ICP as supplementary career information and it enables counselors to recognize the extent of the student's involvement in the process of career exploration.

Experiential learning opportunities are needed to encourage the normal development of career exploration, career preparation, and career maturity. An ICP must record the complete work history of the student. The model ICP includes both a student's work experience and a satisfaction rating scale for each experience. The satisfaction rating is an indication of how the student liked the job. It also lists related occupations. A list of descriptors and corresponding codes to record the appropriate level of the student's satisfaction with the work experience is presented in the ICP pilot instructional booklet.

In order for students with disabilities to compete successfully in the job market, they must acquire the same job related skills as their non-disabled competitors. It is vital that students begin to catalog their skills, many of which students take for granted. Students are asked to provide a self-evaluation of their level of proficiency for each identified skill. This self-evaluation indicates the degree to which the student perceives he or she has mastered that skill.

Involvement in extra-curricular activities demonstrates a versatility of interests. Students should be encouraged to join professional organizations as student members, take part in student life, and explore careers through extra-curricular activities. The ICP catalogs those experiences for the student.

It is important to be able to provide employers with a record of work-related unpaid experiences. Volunteer activities are a means for acquiring skills and experience, demonstrating abilities, and building character. By providing space on the ICP to list volunteer activities, students realize volunteer activities have value and can lead to opportunities for employment.

The accommodations that individuals with disabilities may need in order to be competitive both in their studies and in thier employment at the workplace are entered on the ICP. Students with learning disabilities receiving services at LDSS have an Individual Work Plan (IWP) that identifies needed educational accommodations based upon educational assessments and testing. The case manager will be able to cite the IWP as the source of this information. When accommodations that may be needed, such as adaptive computing devices, are not identified in other records or files they are entered onto the ICP.

The final ICP section titled ' Recommendations for Future Career Planning" may be used at the end of each semester or academic year to record recommendations that the student and/or counselor may have for future career planning. Recommendations may include interventions such as vocational assessments or mentor programs, or planning cooperative learning experiences or internships. Essentially, this is the area for recording future efforts which may aid the student's career development by expanding vocational knowledge, targeting compatible occupations (those which match their values and interests), and gathering occupational information.

Summary and Recommendations

It is especially important that professionals who work with students with disabilities have a working knowledge of the broad array of options available within the educational system that may enable students to further their progress toward identifying, preparing and achieving their

career goal. The ICP is particularly useful as a needs assessment instrument, an inventory of career related experiences, and as a stimulus for personal reflection and conversation. In this respect, the professional may best serve the student, at times, as a resource and referral for additional information.

A number of unique aspects pertain to professionals serving in the role of resource persons for students with a disabilities.

1. Professionals must be aware of and sensitive to the tendency to channel students into career paths that they feel may be appropriate for the student.

2. The professional must become technologically literate. It is vital that professionals have a basic understanding of adaptive technologies. For example, adaptive computer technology is probably the most enabling intervention available for individuals with disabilities to become productive students and employees.

3. There is a need for balance between work and leisure. Students with disabilities often do not fully participate in the total college experience.

4. McDaniels & Gysbers (1992) suggest that the career anchors (needs) of women are different than those of men. It is also clear that different sets of career anchors exist for people with disabilities and for people without disabilities. A productive and satisfying career is very empowering to a person with a disability. It bolsters self-esteem, independence, and self-sufficiency.

5. Since many students with disabilities have little or no meaningful work experience, counselors should consider cooperative work experiences and internships as primary resources for the career preparation of an individual with a disability.

6. Professionals must recognize that mentoring and modeling are key components in the career development of an individual. In fact, McDaniels & Gysbers (1992) emphasize that it is important to find career mentors for individuals from special populations. They indicate that there is a need to provide models and mentors for students with disabilities in a wide range of occupational and educational settings. Counselors are encouraged to promote the visibility of

career models wherever and whenever possible. Fredericks (1988) feels that mentors are highly effective for students with disabilities. He explained that, "Having role models may be one way to dissipate some of the frustration, anxiety, anger, and loneliness that many young adults with disabilities feel. Role models need not be super heroes, but rather people with disabilities who have accomplished goals that are important to them" (p. 8).

Preparing for a career can be one of the most rewarding parts of a student's postsecondary experience. The process involves a considerable investment of time and energy by the student. A variety of resources are available to students to help them identify, prepare for, and achieve career goals. The ICP is an instrument that helps students with disabilities better utilize these resources in a self-determining manner.

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Individual Career Plan

Project I CAN
University of Massachusetts at Amherst
Center for Counseling and Academic Development

Name: Walter Jennings
Student Number: 898-99-555 Date of Birth: 2/29/68 Sex: _ Female X Male
Home Address: 111 Highland Street
Leeds, MA 01053 Level: __ AS X B __ M __ PhD/EdD
Home Telephone: (413) 586-0000

Career Goal To manage a resort hotel.

Counselor Information

		Frequency of Contact
Case Manager:	Tony Vecchione	biwk
Academic Advisor:	Yvonne Morand	sem
College:	CFNR	
Department:	HRTA	
Present Major:	HRTA	

Course Work Completed: (transcript attached w/ GPA)

History of Academic Major

Old Major	New Major	Why Changed	Date
LDARCH	HRTA	8	Fall 1992
RES EC M	LDARCH	1	Fall 1990

Division of Counseling Psychology Services

Vocational Assessments	Date Taken	Counseling Date
Strong-Campbell		
Meyers/Briggs		
Other(s)		
Career Counseling		
Workshops	4-24-92	NA

Mather Career Center Activities

Activity	Count	Date	Staff
1. Orientation	1	9-12-91	Susan Hart
2. SIGI	1	3-21-92	Clark Edwards
3. Workshops			
4. Library Visits	2	4-1 & 4-3-92	NA
5. Campus Recruiting			
6. Employment Referral			

	Company	Semester	Year
7. Co-op Placements			
8. Internships			

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Supplementary Career Information

Type of Information	Source	Date
What Color Is Your Parachute	Book	1991
Management Career Library	SOM	Spring 1992

Work History

Employer	Job Description	Year	Satisfaction Rating
Running Deer Country Club	Groundskeeper	1990-91	2
McDonalds	Cook	1991	4
Hotel Northampton	Bellhop	1992	1

Job Related Skills

Type of Skill	Level of Proficiency
IBM Computer-word processing, data management, desk top publishing	2
Public Speaking	3

Extra-curricular Activities

Activity	Amount of Time/Week	Date
Photography Club	1 hr./wk	1990 to present
HFTA Club	1 hr./mo	1992 to present

Volunteer Activities

Activity	Amount of Time/Week	Date
Hampshire County Food Bank - volunteer driver	4 hrs./mo.	1991-present

Disability

Type	Level
Learning Disability	Post secondary

Accommodations

Needed	Received
Notetaker	Yes
Untimed examinations	Yes

Recommendations for Future Career Planning

Participate in Alumni mentor program next semester

Plan Co-op during Fall 1994

Individual Career Plan

Name: Walter Jennings
Student Number: [illegible]-99-555
Home Address: 111 Highland Street, Leeds, MA 01053
Home Telephone: (413) 586-0000
Date of Birth: 2/24/69 Sex: _ Female X Male
Level: _ AS X B _ M _ PhD/EdD
Career Goal: To manage a resort hotel.

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Vocational Assessments	Date Taken	Counseling Date
Strong-Campbell		
Meyers/Briggs		
Other(s)		
Career Counseling		
Workshops	1/24-27	NA

Mather Career Center Activities

Activity	Count	Date	Staff
1 Orientation		[illegible]	Susan Hart
2 SIGI		[illegible]	Jack Elverud
3 Workshops			
4 Library Visits		[illegible]	NA
5 Campus Recruiting			
6 Employment Referral			

	Company	Semester	Year
7 Co-op Placements			
8 Internships			

Front

Supplementary Career Information

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Plan Co-op during Fall 1994

Back

Figure 1

An Example of An Individual Career Plan